

DOCUMENT

**PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH
AND ACTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE LABOUR MARKET**

**REPORT ON A THIRD SERIES
OF LOCAL CONSULTATIONS
HELD IN EUROPEAN
COUNTRIES – 1986**

FINAL REPORT



**COMMISSION
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**PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH AND ACTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
LABOUR MARKET**

**REPORT ON A THIRD SERIES OF LOCAL CONSULTATIONS
HELD IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
1986**

Final Report

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Document

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SUMMARY

The study describes the organisation, and summarises the outcome, of a series of consultations convened in 1986 to discuss local employment initiatives (LEIs). The series was the third sponsored by the Commission and organised by the Centre for Employment Initiatives, the first being in 1982/83 (when 22 consultations were held), the second in 1984/85 (involving a further 20 consultations). During 1986, 15 consultations were held in 10 Member States.

Local government authorities played a leading role in helping to organise the meetings. A wide range of local institutions both governmental and non-governmental took part in the consultations, as well as representatives of the social partners, educational and training institutions, alternative movements and unemployed groups.

Each of the consultations is briefly described.

Among the conclusions, the report indicates that a more organised and systematic approach to the support of LEIs is beginning to emerge in some countries. However this is often the outcome of the policies and programmes of local authorities, rather than of national governments, which in some cases have not yet adopted coherent policies of support for LEIs. In those localities where LEIs have been established and have won acceptance, manifested in the form of support and advisory services, there is no longer the feeling of isolation and uncertainty which was often observable in earlier years.

The consultations also reveal a growing distrust in macro-economic solutions to the current levels of economic stagnation, and more particularly of unemployment. There are signs of increased interest in evolving concepts and policies which endeavour to reconcile traditional labour market and economic development measures with the new, small-scale, non-traditional approaches typified by LEIs, in an attempt to derive the maximum social and economic benefit from an amalgam of the two.

Much, however, remains to be done in providing the legal, economic and social frameworks needed to stimulate the creation of LEIs and to provide the sustaining climate in which they can survive and flourish. Such frameworks can only emerge from the development of appropriate policies at European, national, and local levels.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The mandate

In its resolution of 6 June 1984, the Council of the European Communities called on the Commission to promote local employment initiatives (LEIs) by means of consultation and the exchange of information on a Community-wide basis. In pursuance of this, the Commission put out to public tender a contract for the organisation of a series of local consultations across Europe in 1984/85. This would represent the first stage of a two-year programme of consultations to be run in all member states and based on the experience gained from the earlier programme of consultations held during 1982/83. The second stage would take place in 1986. The contract for the running of the 1984/85 and 1986 consultations was awarded to the Centre for Employment Initiatives (CEI) in London.

1.2 The Commission's proposal

In its Communication to the Council (COM(83) 662 final), the Commission had proposed (para 94)

"undertaking a further series of local consultations over a two-year period. The new series will continue to pursue the original objectives but will focus more strongly on the function of animation/improved cooperation and on the identification of specific local needs for the development of intermediate support from Community funds.

The consultations will also cover further types of locality, notably maritime and peripheral regions, to complement the existing range of areas covered.

The Commission will also seek to identify and exploit specific opportunities for the direct transfer of experience between those involved in local employment initiatives by inviting entrepreneurs and co-operators from different Member States to participate in relevant consultations."

1.3 The present report

This report covers those consultations about local employment initiatives which were held during 1986. In 1984/85, 20 such meetings were held and a full report on these was submitted to the Commission in October 1985 (published as Documents CB-46-86-484-EN-)C. The report on the 1982/83 series of consultations is also available as a Commission document, (CB-44-85-193-EN-C; also available in French and German).

1.4 An amended approach

Discussions were held with Commission officials during 1985 about the 1986 programme of consultations. They had originally been foreseen as a continuation, along similar lines, of the 1984/85 series, but both the Commission and CEI agreed that there might be advantages to the Commission if the original plan was amended by restricting the number of consultations in 1986, thereby releasing resources for the Commission to pursue other avenues of research in its programme on the development of the labour market. Moreover the fact (noted in the 1984/85 report), that public authorities had started to show growing interest in LEIs, even if only to a limited extent, indicated that it might be reasonable to expect that a larger contribution to the cost of consultations could be obtained from national and local authorities than had previously been the case. In earlier years the general concept and practice of LEIs were still new and untried in many areas, but by 1986 there had been a marked growth in the scope of the activities undertaken by local government authorities in the promotion and support of LEIs.

Accordingly, a more limited contract was concluded between the Commission and CEI for 1986 than for the previous years. It envisaged some 10-12 consultations and a more limited funding of local costs than on the previous occasions. It was assumed that local authorities and other bodies, appreciating the usefulness of the consultations as a means of promoting and coordinating their efforts concerning LEIs, would be prepared to make a substantial input, while at the same time having the benefit of the experience gained by CEI. However, where appropriate and necessary, support was provided to cover the costs of inviting visitors from other countries, so as to facilitate the exchange of experience on an international level. In the event, 15 consultations were included in the 1986 programme.

2. THE ORGANISATION OF CONSULTATIONS ON LOCAL EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES 1986

2.1 The locations and timetable of the 1986 consultations are shown below.

Location	Main organiser	Date (1986)
UK, Bristol	City Council	18-19 April
Belgium, Gembloux	City Council	26 April
UK, Truro	County Council	15 May
France, Poitiers	City Council/ Association Nationale pour le Developpement Local et les Pays (ANDLP)	30-31 May
Germany, Karlsruhe	Forschungsgesellschaft fuer Sozialoekologie und Interdisziplinaere Studien (ISIS)	16-17 June
UK, Nottingham	City Council	20-21 June
Germany, Freiburg	Netzwerk Selbsthilfe, et al	27-28 June
Portugal, Evora	Regional office, Instituto do Emprego e Formacao Profissional	24-25 July
Greece, Kalymnos	Eparchia/Sub-Prefecture	1 September
Greece, Kalamaria (Salonika)	Municipal Council	6-7 September
Italy, Modena and Carpi	Chambers of Commerce	12-13 September
Ireland, Dundalk	Newry & Mourne Co-operative/ Dundalk Enterprise Development Co	12-13 September
Belgium, Brussels	King Baudouin Foundation	17-19 September
Spain, Mostoles (Madrid)	Municipal Council	6-7 November
Italy, Florence	Regional Administration Toscana	16-17 January 1987

2.2 The timing

The preparatory stages for many of the 1986 consultations took somewhat longer than they had in previous years. In addition some of the consultations were held later in the year than had been anticipated; one indeed had to be postponed until early 1987. A number of factors contributed to this situation. The late completion of the contract meant that formal notification of the series and negotiations with possible local organisers started later than on previous occasions. More local government authorities and other statutory bodies were involved than had been the case in previous consultations and their procedures for obtaining formal approval, especially because of the financial implications caused delays. Although this was inconvenient from the point of view of practical organisation and report-writing, the long-term advantage of having official governmental institutions involved in the promotion and support of LEIs was evident.

2.3 Preparatory stages of organisation

As in the earlier series of consultations, the initiative in the preparatory stage was taken by CEI, which informed its contacts (both governmental and non-governmental) of the intention to organise further consultations. It had been agreed with the Commission that, unlike the 1984/85 series, when the focus of the consultations was on the need for and form of support structures for LEIs, there would be no specified focus for the 1986 consultations. This left considerable freedom and discretion to local organisers to choose the format and programme contents of their consultations. The only precondition was that it would be possible to gain additional knowledge from the consultations which could be of use to inform the Commission's LEI policy as it was being developed.

It was also hoped that the consultations would stimulate the local promotion of LEIs and improve the coordination of services available to them. In this context it proved to be timely and advantageous to combine some of the consultations with other planned meetings aiming at the development of local initiatives - as at Poitiers in France - or with an overall mobilisation of public opinion against the threat of local unemployment, as in Truro (UK). In Gembloux (Belgium) the consultation was organised as the final event in a week of local activities aimed at stimulating increased local involvement and participation in employment schemes, while the Dundalk (Ireland) consultation was carefully planned on a joint basis between local organisations in the Irish Republic and in Northern Ireland in an area which had gained unfortunate publicity for acts of violence and political extremism.

2.4 International exchange of experience

At nine of the consultations there were participants from outside the host country. In most of these cases the visitors addressed either plenary sessions or working groups and took an active part in the proceedings. Their contributions were highly appreciated and, as on previous occasions, their presence at the consultations has triggered off further visits and exchanges.

The countries from which the visitors came were: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the UK. Consultations in which outside visitors took part were in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and the UK.

Of particular interest was the link between the consultations held in Nottingham (UK) and Modena (Italy). The City Council of Nottingham expressed interest in the holding of a consultation focused on the local clothing and fashion industry in which a number of small businesses were experiencing difficulty. At the same time the Council suggested that there would be considerable value in linking any such meeting with the parallel experiences in the same industry of a town like Modena. CEI was able to put them in touch with the Chamber of Commerce in Modena and consequently not only were exchange visits made by representatives of the two bodies, but a delegation from Modena (representative of the Chamber of Commerce, trade associations, labour organisations and the University) attended the consultation at Nottingham, while a similar delegation from Nottingham took part in the Modena consultation.

On the basis of the discussions held at both meetings, the authorities from the two cities prepared a proposal for joint action in the fields of training for students in fashion design, of the application of new technology in small-scale fashion workshops and in the exploration of new markets outside Europe.

3. THE CONSULTATIONS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES: SUMMARY REPORTS

3.1 Belgium: Gembloux 26 April 1986

The consultation took place as the culmination of an 'Employment Week' organised by the Employment Commission of the Town Council. It was attended by some fifty persons and presentations were made both by local representatives and by participants from the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Local Authorities, L'Association pour le Developpement des Pyrenees par la Formation, (ADEPFO), France and the Institute of Product Life, Switzerland. There was also active participation by the faculty of the College of Agriculture in whose buildings the meeting took place.

In preparation for the consultation and the other activities of the Employment Week, a directory had been prepared in loose-leaf format and presented in an attractive folder containing details of general economic and social activities carried out in the area, together with information about the key national and regional agencies offering relevant support and services. In addition, there were two series of information sheets, each with some fifty entries. One covered all the local enterprises and businesses, giving details of their labour force and productive activities. The other provided details of all the research sources, both academic and other, available to LEIs.

The consultation reached conclusions on two main topics: food products and the transformation of agricultural products generally; and the possibilities inherent in re-cycling agricultural and industrial residues as a basis for new LEIs. Plans were made for following up the discussion in both these areas through specific developmental measures including product and market research and the exploration of means of financing new initiatives.

The consultation also provided an opportunity for representatives of the Council of Europe to provide information about a new programme for the exchange of young workers in Europe (Nouveaux Compagnons d'Europe), a programme in which the Gembloux Council will consider participating.

3.2 Belgium: Brussels 17-19 September 1986

In 1985, in addition to the consultation held at Antwerp in June, (see report of the 1984/85 series of consultations), an active programme of follow-up meetings was organised in a number of towns and localities in Flanders, including Gent, Hasselt, Ieper, Turnhout, and Kortrijk. These meetings, which involved local and regional authorities, were supported and in some cases sponsored by the King Baudouin Foundation. As a continuation and conclusion of this programme, the Foundation held a seminar/consultation in Brussels in 1986 which discussed the economic, social and environmental

context of LEIs and ways in which they could be integrated into an overall local strategy of development. Based on a discussion of cases from the various localities, there were discussions on financing and networking, and ways of linking economic and social mobilisation of local areas.

Although this consultation occurred towards the end of the 1986 series, it had a particular significance because previously there had been a noticeable imbalance between the activities linked to LEIs in Wallonie and in Flanders. The 1985 Antwerp consultation together with the follow-up culminated in the consultation in September 1986 appear to have provided a valuable stimulus to LEI activity in Flanders.

3.3 France: Poitiers 30-31 May 1986

The consultation at Poitiers was incorporated into a conference on 'The Economic Element in Local Development' organised by the ANDLP (National Association for Local Development) and the City of Poitiers. The conference was held at the municipal exhibition centre and was combined with an exhibition in which some 30 organisations took part. The conference, which was open to the public, was attended by more than 150 people. In addition to plenary sessions, most of the intensive work of the consultation was done in six working groups which discussed:

- The nature of local economic development.
- Local development: economic or integrated social and cultural development?
- The prerequisites for urban development.
- The relationships between local and national policies.
- The scale of local development.
- The role of development agents.

A number of different strands came together at this meeting which was a difficult one to hold together because of the differing backgrounds and expectations of the participants. ANDLP had previously been mainly concerned with rural development issues, and whereas it had started with its main membership among field workers, latterly it had increasingly come to include local authorities as represented by mayors and elected councillors.

In addition the consultation took place at a time when the comparatively newly elected national government had not yet made public its plans for economic and employment

development. There was as a result considerable uncertainty among the participants as to whether their projects e.g. for local employment initiatives were likely to continue to receive official support.

Presentations were made by two representatives of local authorities from the U.K. (City of Bradford and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham) both of which have well-developed policies and extensive programmes for the support and encouragement of LEIs. These presentations attracted a great deal of attention.

3.4 Germany: Karlsruhe 16-17 June 1986

This consultation, which brought together some forty participants from Karlsruhe and a number of other cities, was focused on a variety of practical issues - buildings, finance and training - which affect small-scale, self-managed 'alternative' and cooperative enterprises. The meeting was organised by ISIS, an advisory bureau which is linked to and partially financed by IBEK - a business and engineering consultancy interested in projects for the use of renewable sources of energy within and outside Europe.

On the issue of buildings, the discussion focused on the experience of 'Gewerbehof', which is converting old buildings in Karlsruhe and Hamburg to create a collective of small firms (and, in the case of Hamburg, residential accommodation). Various ways of financial packaging and management were discussed, as well as the legal forms most suitable for the achievement of objectives and an acceptable internal, non-hierarchical management. Other questions related to finance which were discussed included innovative ways of increasing risk capital, such as through the creation of a support and loan community as had been established at Saarbrücken. Discussion on training related both to skill training and to training in co-operative management and the ways to make best use of financial and other resources available in the official national and local training programmes.

3.5 Germany: Freiburg 27-28 June 1986

This consultation was organised by Burghard Flieger, a member of Netzwerk Dreyeckland (the Freiburg area) and other ecological, social and economic groups, all of which he mobilised for the meeting. It was held in a large building used by alternative groups for both small workshops and social activities. Although Freiburg is in Baden-Württemberg which, in general, has fewer unemployment problems than other parts of Germany, its situation is steadily worsening and the local level of unemployment in the city (11%) is above the national average. There is a specific local problem of unemployed university graduates. The City Council while expressing interest, did not provide financial support for

the consultation, but officials from the government, social services, and other departments participated, including the newly appointed employment and economic development officer. Some politicians from the Green and Socialist parties took part but there were none from the majority Christian Democrat (CDU) party. An official from the local employment office made a presentation on the local labour market situation and a representative from the National Manpower Institute Research Department from Nuremburg also attended. The consultation discussed employment initiatives, cultural activities, social initiatives, the constraints on community-based and self-managed enterprises, and local labour market policy. Some 40-50 people participated. The formal presentations were brief and there was a considerable amount of discussion. A particularly useful presentation was made by a representative of the city of Saarbruecken, which appears to be one to the most advanced cities in Germany in working out a local, coordinated labour market policy. This led to a final session, led by local "Green" politicians and others, on the possibility of developing a local employment policy for Freiburg. Netzwerk members from both Bremen and Dortmund took an active part in the meetings.

3.6 Greece: Kalymnos 1 September 1986

This consultation took place in a school on the edge of town and was attended by some 30/40 people, mainly officials and technical (agriculture and fishery) officers, from Rhodes (the main town in the prefecture) and from other islands in the sub-prefecture of Kalymnos, such as Leros and Astypalea. Some of the mayors also attended. After a very brief introductory session (for speeches by the sub-prefect, the mayor, the representative of the Ministry of Youth and the representative of CEI), the rest of the meeting was held in working groups on such topics as: fish farming, beekeeping, municipal marinas, solar energy, and marketing of fish and agro-tourism as a means of supplementing women's incomes.

For each group one of the officials had prepared a short introduction and there was no lack of active participation in the discussion that followed. Despite the smallness of the communities (Kalymnos, the biggest island in the sub-prefecture, has 16,000 inhabitants) many of the participants had not previously met each other and it was the first time that most had met the agricultural officers from Rhodes.

The consultation made some progress in tackling the problem of the isolation of small islands. One result of such isolation was that even the more active participants found that they were either not aware of the facilities available for loans and training or that it was frustrating and almost impossible to extract information and decisions from the relevant bureaucracies and banks. However the basic issue of the lack of fresh water emerged as being the major constraint on both tourism and agriculture.

The closing plenary session of the consultation was as brief as the opening one. It produced six proposals for further action. The informal sequel to the meeting continued until well into the night.

3.7 Greece: Kalamaria 6-7 September 1986

This consultation, held in the Town Hall of this suburb of Salonika, was attended by 35-40 people. It was held on a Saturday and Sunday morning, but the latter session only attracted some 20 participants. The consultation, in terms of participation, suffered from competing with the opening of the International Trade Fair (at which the Prime Minister used the occasion to make a long speech), and from the imminent (4 weeks later) local government elections. Local officials, ministry staff, fishing cooperative officials and individuals took part.

The opening session was addressed by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Northern Greece, and by the Mayor and other official representatives. Two presentations followed: one by an economist, describing the various forms of financing for LEIs open to local authorities, and the other by the Director of Epirus AE (Ltd Co), which is one of three limited companies formed in the late 1970s jointly by the Agricultural and the Industrial Banks to undertake local development in especially difficult areas. Epirus is in the North Western area of Greece. It is mainly mountainous but has developed fishing and fish-farming and its experience has, therefore, some relevance to the Kalamaria area.

The main session was conducted in three working groups. One was on the development of fishing and sea produce; another on the development of the seafront for tourism, recreation and other purposes; and the third, (attended by very few people) on the creation of an industrial estate. Discussion was lively and protracted and there were several conflicts of view, both on how to develop fishing and how to develop physically the seafront or, at least, that part of it not already occupied. Since it is one of the very few areas of open space left near or in the major city of Salonika, there were many ideas for the provision of botanical gardens, museums etc. It was also discussed in the context of the possible Greek bid to hold the 1996 Olympic Games in Salonika.

The local authority is very keen to promote LEIs directly and was occasionally criticised for wanting to move into trading and commercial activities by those who felt that they should be left to the free market.

Political differences, on, for example, what should be the responsibility of the public and the private domains revealed considerable confusion and uncertainty about the roles of the

different levels of local government and the possibilities offered by the present policy of official decentralisation. Delays and bureaucratic procedures in applying the regulations and laws emerged as some of the major issues.

3.8 Ireland: Dundalk 12-13 September 1986

This consultation was organised by a committee set up jointly by the Newry and Mourne Cooperative Society and the Dundalk Enterprise Development Co, the former based in Northern Ireland (UK) and the latter in the Republic of Ireland. The first evening session was held in Newry, and the main session (on 13 September) in Dundalk. The significance of this joint venture was heightened by the fact that the frontier at Newry-Dundalk had been earlier in the year the scene of an "invasion" led by extremist politicians which had concluded in scenes of violence and the arrest of a prominent politician. The consultation was supported by the Youth Employment Agency (Ireland), Co-operation North (a support agency for Northern Ireland) and Local Economic Development Unit (LEDU), a Northern Ireland agency for promoting small business and local economic development.

More than 200 participants took part and most of the work took place in four groups, each of which began with introductory talks by two participants, one from the North and the other from the South. Subjects covered in the groups were: the financing of small businesses and community enterprises; enterprise creation as a basis for local economic development; mobilising community support for local economic development; training in support of enterprise; self-employment as an option for young people; marketing for small firms and community enterprises; and education and enterprise.

The addresses made to plenary sessions included overviews of LEIs in Europe, and of community enterprise and local economic development in Northern and Southern Ireland respectively; and governmental programmes from the Department of Economic Development, Northern Ireland and the Department of Labour in the Republic. There was also a plenary session under the title 'Creating a Local Economic Development Plan', and Michel Chasselein (from Chimay, Belgium) made a considerable impact with his account of cooperative development and financing.

Both the government representatives suggested that support for LEIs was not just a passing phase but was likely to be a permanent feature in all future government policy. They added that while the key criteria for justifying government aid would be the number of jobs created on a viable basis, there were a number of important social and other side-effects and benefits which would be difficult to quantify.

The chairmen of the two local authorities, Newry and Dundalk, also made enthusiastic statements of support for LEI efforts and it is likely that there will be increasing cooperation between the two areas in the future.

Some important issues of policy were discussed in the groups. One concentrated on the extent to which training facilities and other resources should be deployed only in support of 'winners' (that is those most likely to succeed). Another concerned the extent to which community-based approaches should be concerned with those who did not appear to be 'natural' entrepreneurs. Attention was drawn to the fact that enterprise, economic development and employment creation, while linked, were not necessarily mutually supportive, and that policy choices had in many instances to be made as to which should have priority in the allocation of resources.

3.9 Italy: Modena 12-13 September 1985

This consultation was one of the two linking the cities of Nottingham and Modena, focusing specifically on the textile and clothing industries (see para 3.13).

The British delegation, invited by the Carpi local authority and the Modena Chamber of Commerce, spent one and a half days before the meeting visiting a variety of local textile firms, as well as CITER (the Emilia Romagna Textile Information Centre) and the 'Carpi-Qualita' consortium.

The consultation began with a plenary session at which a paper on the city's industrial structure was presented. It described the 2,000 odd small textile firms which dominate the locality's economy, and pinpointed marketing, design and distribution as areas requiring improvement.

The second day of the consultation aimed to draw up proposals for cooperation between Modena and Nottingham's textile industries. The meeting divided into five workshops which discussed: design and fashion trends; marketing and distribution; financial investments and the banking system; training; and product quality management.

An English and an Italian coordinator jointly led each working group. At the final plenary session a number of plans for joint initiatives emerged, which would be put forward for the approval of members of relevant organisations and authorities in the two cities.

In the concluding plenary session, after the rapporteurs had given accounts of each workshop, representatives of both cities resolved to take the meeting's proposals to their respective authorities in order to consolidate plans swiftly.

Both the Nottingham and the Modena meetings enlisted the active participation of the trades unions, who expressed a commitment to change and new forms of training.

3.10 Italy: Florence 15-16 January 1987

The consultation, organised by the Regional Administration of Toscana was attended by more than 250 participants from local communities in the region, intercommunal associations, trade unions and other associations as well as from cooperative and other local initiatives. The meeting was held to discuss the findings of a research report on actual and potential LEIs in the region, undertaken during 1986 by Dr F Strati. At plenary sessions both the report and case studies were presented as well as statements on LEI policy by the President of the Regional Council and the officer (assessore) responsible for employment. In addition to an overview on the Commission's LEI programme in Europe, the relevance of the Integrated Mediterranean Programme to LEIs was discussed and the Chairman of the OECD/ILE Committee (the Italian delegate) spoke about the OECD programme and also, on behalf of the Italian government, welcomed the lead being taken by the Tuscan region.

Detailed discussion took place in working groups on: production initiatives; agriculture, tourism and environment; social services; PIM and LEIs; integrated development by provinces and communes. Among the local developments reported was a project for the development and utilisation of local geo-thermal resources (steam and hot water), a proposal which had been discussed at the 1983 LEI consultation in Volterra. During the Florence consultation, it was announced that the Region would, for the first time, have a budget of 1 million lire for the support of LEIs in 1987 (ECU 900,000).

3.11 Portugal: Evora 24-25 July 1986

The consultation, held in one of the main agricultural areas of Central Portugal, was organised by the regional office of the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (INEP) and attended by some 130 participants. They included representatives of several local municipalities, cooperatives and artisans' associations as well as individual entrepreneurs. Speakers included the president of INEP and other senior officials from Lisbon as well as local people seeking to start new initiatives. A key topic, both in plenary and working group sessions, concerned how newly published regulations on assistance to LEIs were to be applied.

Examples were quoted of initiatives based on local crafts, on protection of the local environment, and on cultural heritage. A participant from Spain described the system of support for LEIs being established in Andalucia, while the representative of CEI gave a talk on the U.K. system which provoked many questions.

3.12 Spain: Mostoles (Madrid) 6-7 November 1986

The consultation in which 90-100 persons participated, was held in the Cultural Centre of the suburb of Mostoles, about 20 kilometres from the centre of Madrid. Originally a small country town, Mostoles has grown into a mainly 'dormitory' area of some 150,000 people. Most of the participants at the meeting were officials of local government, of the regional government of Madrid or of the central government. Much of the discussion was about the general development of the region and of the problems facing small and often very poor agricultural and mountain communities in the region around the capital city which exercised a strong centralising force for population, economic activity and the allocation of resources. At the plenary session on the first day, administrators and researchers made presentations giving an analysis of the main economic and social features of the region. The representative of the Commission and of the Centre for Employment Initiatives spoke about the European Commission's policy on LEIs and on experience gained from other consultations. An extensive documentation was made available including translations of relevant parts of Commission documents on LEIs done into Spanish especially for the occasion.

Three working groups were formed: 1. Local development in the region; 2. Problems of local government administration in local development; 3. Local Employment Initiatives including the employment and training of development agents. At the final session, the absence of local individuals and groups was noticeable through the lack of proposals for new initiatives. However a discussion on the function of development agents in promoting new LEIs led to an animated debate as to how the cost of employing such agents should be borne as between local authorities and the regional and central government departments.

3.13 UK: Bristol 18-19 April 1986

This consultation, organised through the City Council, was held in a former school building which has been converted into premises housing a local employment venture funded through the European Social Fund. It is sited on a housing estate in the southern, less prosperous, part of Bristol. Although the area as a whole has an unemployment rate below the national average, certain parts have special economic and social problems. Some 40 participants attended, including representatives of a number of functioning LEIs in Bristol as well as visitors from two cities which are 'twinning' with Bristol - Hanover (Germany) and Oporto (Portugal). The background to unemployment in the region was presented in plenary session by the professor of business administration at the University of Bath, who is also Chairman of the local Area Manpower Board set up by the Manpower Services

Commission.

The conclusions of the consultation laid stress on the need for an overall local strategy sufficiently coherent to draw together all interested public and private bodies in support of LEIs. Specific recommendations were made concerning the need to ensure the availability of suitable premises, mobilising local savings in support of LEIs and the need for funding on a longer term than the present year-to-year arrangements adopted by both governmental and international agencies. In addition to their limited role in creating new jobs, the value of LEIs in providing hope, self-respect and dignity to both individuals and local communities as a whole was stressed.

3.14 UK: Truro 15 May 1986

Instigated by a working group convened by the County Council, this consultation took the form of a 'convention' entitled 'Beating Unemployment'. The meeting was divided into two parts, the morning being given over to technical discussions among local authority, voluntary organisation and employment development workers, and the afternoon consisting of a public meeting at which there was a presentation by the CEI representative followed by open discussions and a panel discussion in which local political, trade union, church and other leaders took part. Cornwall had been particularly hard hit by cuts in employment in local industries such as tin-mining and ship construction and repair.

The consultation took place at a time when the local authorities were particularly anxious to draw the attention of the national government to their plight, as well as to mobilise local action for dealing with unemployment. A follow-up questionnaire sent to more than 70 of those who participated showed that most felt that the convention had enabled them to give and share information, to look at ways of cooperating in the future and to focus their thoughts on new ideas and initiatives. A 5-point action plan was put forward for the future consisting of:

- a comprehensive information resource including a data base and the provision of mobile support services for outlying rural areas;
- a flexible community enterprise fund to provide small seed-corn grants;
- a special development unit with the task of identifying new employment initiatives and providing them with technical assistance during both feasibility and operational stages;
- the creation of a network at country level of the growing number of community-based initiatives;

- a concentrated effort to build effective local partnerships between key organisations and groups in order to provide the different kinds of advice, information, training, support and technical assistance required by LEIs.

3.15 UK: Nottingham 20-21 June 1986

The consultation was organised by the City Council through its Economic and Employment Development Unit. At their request, contact was made with Modena (Emilia Romagna) where, the Nottingham authorities had heard that there was a clothing and textile industry dependent on small firms, as is the case in Nottingham. As a result, an agreement was made for two consultations to be held, with cross representation: the Modena meeting to be in September (see para 3.9).

Some forty participants attended the consultation, which was held at the City Council's Fashion Centre. They included representatives from the local authorities, the chambers of commerce and trade associations of Modena and the nearby textile town of Carpi. The programme included plenary sessions at which both UK and Italian speakers, (including Professor Newton of Trent Polytechnic (Fashion and Design) and Professor Gaeta of Modena University (Economics)) made presentations, and discussion groups. The groups discussed the introduction of technology, design and marketing, and training. There was also an exhibition of work by design students from Trent Polytechnic. Special visits to local workshops and the local enterprise development centre, as well as a civic reception were organised for the Italian delegates before the consultation.

The conclusions revealed both similarities and differences between the two cities in methods of industrial organisation. But in both, the restructuring of the clothing and fashion industry in order to retain jobs took priority over those of employment creation. Preliminary proposals were made for joint studies and action in the future: these were taken further in the Modena consultation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Through the consultations, the Commission:

- has been able to elicit information from the local and regional levels and feed it back into policy proposals with the minimum of delay;
- has made its presence and impact felt directly at local level (within the limits imposed by the availability of staff members and the restrictions on their mission-travels) in a previously unexplored fashion;
- has stimulated requests for support for LEIs being made to the European Social Fund on a more timely and appropriate basis than in many other areas covered by ESF guidelines.

4.2 A pro-active policy

In pursuance of its LEI programme to date the Community, both directly and through its cooperative action with the OECD LEI/ILE programme, has not only reacted in a practical fashion (albeit on a limited scale) to the growth of unemployment, it has succeeded in being pro-active. It has given a lead and sense of direction to member governments, helping them to identify and evaluate small but valuable initiatives that can be and are being made by local groups and institutions, both governmental and non-governmental.

4.3 Financing

The most effective way of utilising the Community's financial instruments for the promotion and development of LEIs has not yet been found. The decision to establish a separate directorate for the harmonisation and coordination of financial instruments could be helpful in this respect.

4.4 LEIs, and the support and advice structures which provide essential services to LEIs, are similar to other commercial and social undertakings in that they require time in which to build up their viability. Given that they also tend to start with a minimal capital investment, it is adding intolerably to the financial burden and anxieties of those working in and/or responsible for them, to provide funding only on a year by year basis. Even the most primitive form of forward planning for a small enterprise requires the possibility of foreseeing reasonably assured sources of revenue for at least 2-3 years. Indeed, the process of moving from deficit through break-even to modest surplus is likely to take five years for most LEIs and, if the surplus is to be sufficient to clear off the first years' accrued deficit, even five years is likely to be an underestimate.

- 4.5 For LEIs of all kinds, in virtually all member countries, there is still a lack of readily accessible venture capital. Traditional money markets are not geared to meeting their needs and, in banking terms, the apparent combination of high risk and low return and an overall aggregate demand of quite limited dimensions is unlikely to lead to change unless there is specific encouragement and intervention through financial or other incentives. Current research appears to show that those incentives (business expansion schemes and the like), introduced to encourage investment in traditional small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), have had (and are likely to have in the future) little effect in favour of LEIs. Nor are the highly publicised offers of commercial banks in favour of small businesses much more effective in respect of LEIs. New or amended methods of supplying start-up as well as working capital and development funding are therefore called for, which provide amounts of money on conditions and terms which are appropriate to the resources, capacities and demands of LEIs.
- 4.6 It appears that one of the most effective ways of providing financial support for LEIs is the creation of locally based credit guarantee schemes. The precise forms of these vary according to the exigencies of national banking law and practice. In essence, what appears to be needed is the creation of a credit fund through the provision of guarantee funds collected from a variety of sources (local authorities, private sector, trade unions, foundations, welfare associations, pension funds, banks, savings societies etc). Lending terms which are consistent with the lower levels of the money market and affordable by LEIs, would enable them to approach the banks and other financial institutions with the kind of collateral support which is normally required by such market institutions.
- 4.7 To enable schemes for transition from welfare payments to economic productivity to function better, consideration should be given by the relevant governmental employment services to schemes of project financing in addition to existing schemes of financing individuals by enterprise allowances. This would enable the schemes to be applied to a broader range of persons, some of whom might not be ready or competent to tackle setting up an initiative on their own. It would also assist in ensuring that, for such people, more adequate management and support could be made available.
- 4.8 The growth of self-employment has been stimulated in a number of countries by the introduction in some cases, or the expansion in others, of schemes of payment aimed at enabling the unemployed to pass as smoothly as possible from dependence on social security or relief funds to complete or

partial economic independence through income-earning activity. Such programmes require continuous monitoring and evaluation not only to ensure that they are effective in achieving their objectives but also to ensure that they are accessible to those most in need of assistance if they are to become economically active, such as the long-term unemployed or those with handicaps which inhibit their easy transition from dependence to independence.

- 4.9 A number of LEIs have been created with the aim of providing a supplement to existing individual or family income. While the usual criteria of financial viability may have to be applied to such LEIs some allowances will need to be made for them. Examples of such LEIs can be found in rural areas, where a smallholder may be able to become more self-sufficient by seeking to supplement basic income from the commercialisation of products, craft work or by other means. This approach can also be found in urban contexts especially among 'alternative' and other similar groups. However unconventional or even uncommercial it may appear it should be assisted, since it is a valid move toward more independent economic activity.

4.10 Local authorities

There has been a significant growth of local authority activity in favour of LEIs. Where the administration and legal framework permits and the financial relationship is conducive to further decentralisation, such as in the case of autonomous regions or provinces, the authorities responsible for the central labour market and other responsible central departments are in some instances considering devolving their powers of decision-making and financial allocation for LEIs and LEI support structures. Local knowledge in the assessment of applications for loan or subvention, the lessening of distance (both physical and psychological) between applicant and authority, and the consequent lessening of delay in obtaining decisions are all important positive benefits to be gained from further decentralisation.

- 4.11 The role of local authorities can be multiple and many different aspects of their work can be deployed in favour of LEIs. These include land and buildings loans, information, advice on legal, fiscal, business management and training, and special services for handicapped or minority groups. A number of authorities have introduced useful schemes of coordination between their various services so as to provide what has been called 'one-stop shopping' for those considering or already engaged in LEIs. In some cases the coordination of information and services and the availability of such services in one location involves other authorities, such as the regional or local branches of central government or parastatal bodies. In addition, in one or two countries

important advances have been made in bringing the resources (technical, information, and financial) of the private sector into a combined effort involving also local and central authorities. *

4.12 'Twinning' and LEIs

Many local authorities in Europe have 'twinning' arrangements with areas of equivalent size in one or more other countries. Such arrangements are, in many cases, of long standing, and regular programmes of exchange visits are arranged each year. However, the focus of such visits has been more often ceremonial, cultural, sporting or social than economic. There is now a growing interest in exchanges of experience and ideas focused on specific labour market and LEI issues between towns and regions with similar sectoral interests, of the kind demonstrated by Nottingham and Modena.

4.13 Support structures

There has been a steady increase in the number of LEI support structures in most member countries. But there is some evidence that these providers of information, advice, market and other feasibility studies, are available in forms more effectively geared to the needs of traditional small businesses and entrepreneurs rather than to those of the new, often unconventional types of initiatives and entrepreneurs. Those involved in them are often motivated to create an enterprise not so much in order to accumulate wealth or because they are driven by some specific creative idea but rather because they are impelled to make an effort to escape from the stagnation of long-term unemployment or to avoid poor working conditions in the jobs which may still be available to them. More work is needed to identify the particular skills required by those working in LEI support structures, to enable them to be more effective in meeting the needs of these LEIs.

- 4.14 More work is required to identify the changing needs of LEIs in respect of advice, technical support, funding and internal management, bearing in mind what has been said about the motivations of the new entrepreneurs and the smallness of the numbers involved in any one LEI. As an LEI is being planned, launched, established, developed, consolidated, expanded, and diversified, changing and varied skills will have, in part at least, to be provided from outside the LEI itself. This places a special responsibility on the support structure available locally both to provide the required component of information or skill, but also to have established a good enough working relationship with the LEI so that its contribution is acceptable.

* See also D Johnstone "The role of local authorities in promoting local employment initiatives" in Commission of European Communities Document series No. CB 46-86-460-EN-C.

4.15 Development agents

In some countries increasing numbers of people are being appointed to operate as full-time employment development officers at the local level. Such personnel may be employed by local authorities as part of their economic development, industrial development or employment development functions; others are employed with more specific responsibility for particular groups (youth, women, ethnic minorities, physically or mentally handicapped etc). In some areas non-governmental associations have been created for employment development purposes and, often with grant aid from local or central government, employ specialist staff to promote and support LEIs.

4.16 All of this has given rise to further discussion on the status and training of 'development agents'. Training programmes have been established in a number of countries, some of them having support from the European Social Fund. In addition, training has become an active issue in the countries participating in the Integrated Mediterranean Programme, in each of which (France, Greece and Italy) new funding support has been provided by the Commission to undertake training of development agents. A number of issues remain to be clarified, for example to what extent a 'new profession' is being established, or whether existing field staff, for example in agricultural extension, adult education, and social welfare, given supplementary orientation and training, could be better employed for the purpose of helping LEIs.

4.17 What is clear is that full-time professional development agents cannot, in general, be successfully employed unless the authorities responsible for their appointment and utilisation are fully aware of the need for them and the purposes for which they are required. There is thus a need - at least as urgent as that for full-time training of the agents - of a systematic programme of consciousness raising, information and orientation for local elected politicians, officials in central, regional and local government, and other decision-takers and policy-makers in local areas.

4.18 Information

Through the consultations and other means there has been an increased general awareness of the possibilities offered by LEIs and of the Commission's programmes. This spread of information is still very partial and incomplete, both in terms of content and of the levels which it reaches. The establishment of ELISE as a structured information system has taken time and only in the second half of 1986, through publications, meetings and a network of correspondents has it begun to make a perceptible impact. EGLEI, the European Group for LEIs, in particular through its 1986 project of exchange study visits to examine the methodology of local

employment development agents, has also made a useful contribution to the spread of information.

In general, information has got through more successfully at what might be called the 'middle' level, to practitioners and organisations more or less directly concerned with local employment initiatives, including local government authorities. The potential involvement of this latter group has been greatly increased through the joint ELISE-IULA (International Union of Local Authorities: European Region) project for a special local authorities bulletin. However, at two other crucial levels, information is still deficient. The first is the level of policy-makers and decision-takers in the broad fields of policy concerning labour market policies, employment policies and both national and local economic development strategies. The second level at which more needs to be done is in informing the 'lay' public, where there is the need to awaken more people to the practical possibility of their doing something themselves in the form of local initiative, and also to create a much needed 'groundswell' of public opinion so as to incite and support policy-makers.

4.19 In general

In some countries there is still a tendency for LEIs to be identified either with traditional forms of small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employment or, on the other hand, with 'alternative' and therefore almost by definition, marginal groups with little to contribute to the national economy. In some cases this polarisation is exaggerated by the groups themselves on both sides, not wishing to be 'associated' with the other. There is much to be gained by keeping the concept of LEIs very broad and all-inclusive rather than separated out into different approaches. Current studies aimed at exploring the concepts and practicalities of local economic strategies may help to provide a comprehensive context or framework within which this catholic and comprehensive approach to LEIs can be maintained and strengthened. Moreover, with the continuing need to reassess the validity of regional policies within countries in the light of the employment situation, it will become increasingly important to locate LEI policy within an updated regional policy.

- 4.20 In general, the atmosphere and environment for most LEIs has become friendlier over the last five years. Although limited, there is more understanding, and in some cases acceptance, of their usefulness. They still, however, constitute a problem for economists and business analysts. It is necessary to point out that if the conditions obtaining in a locality were such as to enable a traditional small and medium-sized enterprise to come into existence, in all probability it would have done so without additional prompting or incentives from the State or the Community.

LEIs for the most part are attempted, and have their validity, in circumstances which are too difficult for the traditional SME. These difficulties may apply both to the protagonists and also to the environment in which they are living and trying to operate. The justification for external support is that, without it, such people are likely to remain dependent on transfer payments for the indefinite future. While it may be argued that the only real solution lies in major macro-economic policies which will ensure large scale 'normal' employment, there is so far little sign of such a solution even being propounded, let alone put into practice. In the meantime there is a continuing need for action to support people's own efforts to find a better way for themselves.

- 4.21 On the conceptual side there is an urgent need to work out an explanation of the LEI phenomenon in terms which are intelligible to and accepted by economists and politicians. In particular theoretical linking is required between micro-economic description and macro-economic analysis and prediction, so that in a realistic fashion the contributions - and the limitations - of LEIs may be introduced into the mainstreams of national and European policies.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Commission should confirm and clarify its support for LEIs. This can in part be done through issuing a new Communication to the Council of Ministers, as is envisaged, incorporating the findings of the recent consideration of LEIs by the Economic and Social Committee.
- 5.2 However it is important that the Commission does not indulge in public declarations which are not implemented or followed up properly, through the allocation of sufficient staff and budgetary resources to provide the information and other back-up services which member governments and the social partners in member states are entitled to expect. These resources and back-up services have not been available hitherto. If there is no political will within the Commission itself, and specifically in the directorate and divisions responsible for financial and support services, the Commission is only likely to discredit itself and put its credibility at stake.
- 5.3 The current review and proposed reforms of the financial instruments of the Commission should specifically take into account the political and administrative issues involved in making possible the availability of European monies, whether as grant, loan, or investment, to small decentralised initiatives. To this end discussion should be initiated with financial institutions and authorities at both European and national levels to determine what supplementary or alternative channels of finance could effectively be introduced to meet the needs of small local employment initiatives.
- 5.4 The Commission should make more resources available to facilitate the international exchange of experience concerning LEIs, in particular among those working at local and intermediate levels to promote and support LEIs. The methods utilised should include decentralised information services, as being developed by ELISE, and also opportunities for gaining first-hand experience through study visits and local attachments in other countries.
- 5.5 At both European and national levels steps should be taken to consolidate the gains which have been achieved, in awareness, in policies and in practical actions, among local government authorities, trade unions and other workers' bodies, employers' associations, chambers of commerce and other professional and private sector associations. At the European level the Commission has a key role to play, as part of a pro-active policy, to encourage further each of these agencies to recognise its responsibilities towards, as well

as the opportunities inherent in LEIs, while at the same time urging on them the need to cooperate with each other in order to achieve the desired results in what often appears an increasingly difficult and hostile economic climate.

- 5.6 The Commission together with member governments should sponsor an information campaign aimed at making the general public more aware of the existence of LEIs and of their potential value. Articles should be commissioned and disseminated so as to reach the lay reader as well as those likely to be involved for political or technical reasons. A popular publication based on case material readily available through the Commission's own support for LEIs over the last 4-5 years and published in all the Commission's languages would make an important contribution to informing public opinion and thus lead to both more political support for, and more widespread direct involvement in, LEIs.
- 5.7 Governments should review the facilities and resources which they have made available for the promotion and support of small enterprises in order to determine to what extent they are appropriate and accessible to the less orthodox and traditional forms of small businesses and other local employment initiatives. In particular they should recognise the contribution that LEIs can make in those areas suffering most from the effects of economic depression and high rates of unemployment, where external private investment is unlikely to be attracted.
- 5.8 Governments should ensure that programmes and schemes introduced to enable unemployed persons dependent on social security or other forms of transfer payments, in addition to making adequate financial arrangements, should also provide appropriate and accessible advisory and support services.
- 5.9 Governments should pay particular attention to the contribution which might be made through the stimulation and support of LEIs in special problem areas. In terms of economic stagnation, 'disinvestment', and high levels of unemployment, many of the 'black spots' in Europe (including run down inner city areas, ill-planned and ill-sited peripheral housing areas, and remote and isolated rural, mountain and island communities) are becoming blacker. They are likely to be by-passed by reinvestment and economic revival which is solely dependent on market demand. In determining the 'viability' of LEIs in such areas, the criteria applied should take account of the economic and social costs engendered in such areas if left as they are,

costs of maintaining law and order, costs of providing food and lodging subsidies, and the loss of revenue from both direct and indirect taxation).

- 5.10 Local authorities, and unions of local authorities, should increase their endeavours to provide the local infrastructure within which LEIs can be created and flourish. This does not necessarily mean that LEIs will all be direct 'municipal enterprises' although some may well turn out that way. In order to provide the best service to LEIs local authorities may find it useful to establish 'mixed' bodies together with relevant groups from the private sector and key institutions from central government.
- 5.11 In addition to the recommendations made above, a number of proposals which have not been implemented, are to be found in the two previous reports on consultations about LEIs. These recommendations are still relevant. (See para 1.3.)

Programme of research and actions on the development of the labour market
Report on a third series of local consultations held in European countries — 1986
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